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A Long Way for a Short Story: The Filmic Narrative Mode of *The Glass Menagerie*

Alice Clark-Wehinger

1 The long genesis of *The Glass Menagerie* from short story to one-act play to film synopsis to Broadway play, testifies to Tennessee Williams' predilection for reorganizing material: rewriting it obsessively until it finally evolved into what he considered a finished aesthetic piece. A close examination of the genesis of *The Glass Menagerie* brings to the fore its distinct affiliation with the short story and the filmic genre. This paper will explore the cinematic underpinnings of *The Glass Menagerie* as it evolved from a short story, "Portrait of a Girl in Glass," written before 1943 and published in *One Arm and Other Stories* (1948) to a sixty-page-one-act play,[1] which Williams reworked as a film synopsis, *The Gentleman Caller* (1943)[2] to the play we all know today, *The Glass Menagerie*. Finally, it will focus on Jacques Nichet's[3] *La Ménagerie de verre*, an adaptation of Williams' play which demonstrates how the work can manoeuvre between theatre and cinema.

2 *The Glass Menagerie* evolved in different stages, starting with the manuscript that Williams called the "reading version" which he sent to his agent in the fall of 1943. It was published by Random House in 1945, and reprinted by New Directions in 1949 and has become known as the "written version," as opposed to the "acting version," published by the Dramatists Play Service in 1948. A conscientious critic should be aware of these different versions for several reasons, notably because the Dramatists Play Version removed the thirty-four screen devices, which were originally in the written version. Reference here will be to the New Directions, written version that incorporates these metadramatic elements. As far as adaptations go, this paper will briefly consider Rapper's film, *The Glass Menagerie* (1950), and most importantly, Jacques Nichet's French staged adaptation, *la Ménagerie de Verre*[4] (2011). Nichet integrates the missing screen devices into his play and, aware of the missing movie script, he creates a cinematic interface for a filmic narrative mode to take shape within his adaptation. The scope of

this paper expands into a vast number of genres and semiotic languages which rely on different narrative strategies and repertoires. As a result, it is not an exhaustive survey of the filmic effects in the works mentioned previously.

3 In keeping with the topic of short story and cinema, this paper will begin with a brief examination of the nascent visual register of *The Glass Menagerie's* hypotext: "Portrait of a Girl in Glass,"[5] considering, in particular, the visual and sensorial character of Tennessee Williams' narrative style. One of the most striking aspects of his short story is its capacity to achieve a sense of image flow, generated from a series of concentrated Expressionistic visual peaks contrasting light and dark imagery. Many passages from the short story involve the simultaneous interplay of signifiers associated with the visual mode of theatre and cinema. Laura's bedroom, for example, overlooks a "dusky areaway" nicknamed "Death Valley." It is depicted as a theatre of light and darkness. The semantic interface between the visual and narrative semiotic systems establishes a relationship with the *mise en scène* of the bedroom, infused with chiaroscuro lighting. This passage can be read as a tiny script where Mrs. Wingfield speaks in direct discourse. She is talking to the secretary of the business school over the phone and, at the same time, Tom and Laura are listening in on the conversation. This scene of disclosure is staged with histrionic emotivity. Refusing to believe that Laura has skipped school for two months, Mrs. Wingfield bellows out: "Laura has been attending that school of yours for two months, you certainly ought to recognize her name!" (1). The equivalent of a pan in on Laura's face occurs, as the narrator, Tom, describes his sister lying in bed "tense and frightened" (1), aware of the fact that her mother now knows that she has been playing hooky from business college. A long description of Laura's bedroom follows. The narrative sequence evokes a cinematic change of shot that directs focalization onto the layout and lighting of Laura's bedroom:

> She kept the shades drawn down [...] her days were spent in perpetual twilight [...] When you entered the room there was always this soft, transparent radiance in it which came from the glass absorbing what ever faint light came through the shades on Death Valley. I have no idea how many articles there were of this delicate glass. There must have been hundreds of them. (2)

4 The signifiers describing the bedroom use the paradigm sets of the dramatic and cinematic modes to elicit chiaroscuro effects. The lighting effects contribute to staging the bedroom as a conflicted mental landscape, symbolic of Laura's divided inner consciousness. The external effect of chiaroscuro lighting corroborates the young woman's inner battle against darkness (alienation and depression), and her attempt to seek salvation in the light of her glass menagerie.

5 The line from the next paragraph suggests a change of shot—a dissolve—as Laura's room fades out and the paradigm of music takes over: "She lived in a world of glass and also a world of music" (2). The intersemiotic texture of the passage is enriched through the auditory paradigm of music. Laura's mental universe is evoked in Expressionist terms, substantiating the return of the repressed, since the music she plays is an expression of the memory of her lost father: "The music came from a 1920 Victrola and a bunch of records that dated from the same period, pieces such as 'Whispering' or 'The Love Nest' or 'Dardanella.' These records were souvenirs of our father, a man whom we barely remembered, whose name was spoken rarely" (2). This is but one example of how different semiotic systems do work together semantically to corroborate the sense of loss and melancholy which is the hallmark of both the short story and the play. The interrelationship of the semiotic registers of music (the old records which conjure up

the repressed father figure) and darkness construct a network of signifiers organized around the affective element of melancholy, which orchestrates plot and character development in the short story, the play and the movie. As a result, Williams' use of highly visual, sensorial and emotive paradigms takes fiction back to its primary sources. In his chapter "Cinema of the Mind," in *From Where You Dream,* Robert Olen Butler insists that the fiction writer must be capable of developing a writing technique which uses vivid sensorial experiences so that the reader can see the story in a filmic way:

> When you read a work of literature, the characters and the setting and the action are evoked as images, as a kind of dream in your consciousness [...]. The primary senses—sight and sound—prevail, just as in the cinema, but in addition to seeing and hearing, you experience taste and smell, you can feel things on your skin as the narrative moves through your consciousness. This is omnisensual cinema. (64)

6 Both Butler and Williams accentuate the importance of the organic and the sensorial in art. In his "Production Notes" to *The Glass Menagerie*, Williams stresses this point:

> The straight realistic play with its genuine Frigidaire and authentic ice-cubes, its characters who speak exactly as the audience speaks, corresponds to the academic landscape and has the same virtue of a photographic likeness. Everyone should know nowadays the unimportance of the photographic in art: that truth, life, or reality is an organic thing which the poetic imagination can represent or suggest [...]. (131)

7 From this point of view, Tennessee Williams' approach to writing converges with Robert Olen Butler's organic model of creativity. Both writers consider the primary senses as the impetus for organizing aesthetic material and use sensory modes of perception in writing. To suggest the superiority of the visual over the intellectual paradigm, Butler cites Picasso: "If only we could pull our brains out and use only our eyes" ("Cinema of the Mind" 63). This epigram points to the fact that narrative techniques have their source in the primary senses—specifically sight—which prevails in cinema. Butler thus leads us to the conclusion that cinematic techniques are embedded within the mode of fiction writing itself: "All of the techniques that filmmakers employ, and which you understand intuitively as filmgoers, have direct analogies in fiction" (64). Williams' fiction is inextricably linked to the filmic narrative mode, from his career as a short story writer on to playwright and scriptwriter. His early short stories: "The Resemblance between a Violin Case and a Coffin" and "Portrait of a Girl in Glass" both develop a narrative technique whose chiaroscuro effects produce visual-sensorial scenes which function like cinematic shots. The titles of the two short stories, with their insistence on the pictorial: "Portrait," and the visual: "Resemblance," are harbingers of the filmic narrative mode which would soon become Tennessee Williams' hallmark. As "Portrait of a Girl in Glass" began to evolve from a narrative to a dramatic form, the title changed to *The Glass Menagerie*, but essentially it still maintained a very personal focus on memory as an omni-sensorial activity stimulated from the ebb and flow of visual and tactile stimuli. Unlike traditional plays, *The Glass Menagerie* was written and staged as a memory play.[6] The memory play requires the use of innovative techniques in order to allow the experience of the inner self to flow into the fictional medium. It functions much like a cinematic shot, or a unit of uninterrupted flow imagery. There is no doubt that in writing and in staging *The Glass Menagerie,* Williams had decided that memory would be the motivating force of characterization, staging and plot development. In Scene One, stage directions give a brief description of the Wingfield apartment. The home environment is intended to be

an extension of the inner self and music is played in the background to color the opening scene with a heightened sense of nostalgia[7]:

> The scene is memory. Memory takes a lot of poetic license. It omits some details; others are exaggerated, according to the emotional value of the articles it touches, for memory is seated predominantly in the heart. (143)

8 Memory, indeed, orchestrates Jacques Nichet's Expressionistic interpretation of *la Ménagerie de Verre.* Nichet combines sound, color and lighting to stage emotion as a synaesthetic experience. In the exposition scene, the title of the play is projected onto a moveable screen in the middle of the stage, followed by Tennessee Williams' name, which appears in gigantic letters. Technically speaking, the device allows for a transition to take place from one medium to another: from the stage to the cinematic screen and back again. In his "Production Notes" to *The Glass Menag*erie, Williams explains that the moveable screen and the filmic devices can be used to enhance the play's "emotional appeal" (132). However, he averts the more concrete question of how these innovative screen devices may eventually affect audience response. In answer to this last question, Griselda Pollock's *Vision and Difference* (224) argues that the devices lend themselves to Bertolt Brecht's strategies of distanciation. The screen device, with the thirty-four images and legends proved to be problematic for directors and producers alike. They were never used in the acting version of the Broadway play. Williams insists that he did not regret the omission of the screen device, adding:

> I think it may be interesting to some readers to see how this device[8] was conceived. So I am putting it into the published manuscript. These images and legends, projected from behind, were cast on a section of wall between the front-room and dining-room areas, which should be indistinguishable from the rest when not in use [...]. An imaginative producer or director may invent many other uses for this device than those indicated in the present script. In fact the possibilities of the device seem much larger to me than the instance of this play can possibly utilize. (132)

9 In the Dramatists Play Service version of *The Glass Menagerie*, which is now commonly referred to as the "acting version,"[9] all of the thirty-four screen devices have been removed, leaving eighteen music cues in their place. Today, the cinematic interstices are rarely used. There is the exception of Nichet's Expressionist adaptation that incorporates the screen device and allows for a transmutation of the screenplay to take place, bringing it closer to the cinematic medium. In the opening scene,[10] an image of huge billowing white masses is projected onto the screen device where Tom's shadowy figure emerges onto the stage. The projection of massive clouds transforms into thunderous waves, which can be heard howling in the background where boats are quivering on the surface of the water. The flow of imagery evokes the Expressionist vein in which Williams' play was initially conceived. And the nautical images on the screen remind us that Tom has joined the marines. Thus the screen device allows Nichet to reinstate the analeptic structure of the original version, by having Tom appear on stage to recount the memory scenes as a long flashback. Dressed in a duffel coat, Tom describes his new life in the Merchant Marines after having fled Saint-Louis and his smothering mother. Dramatic emphasis is then shifted to Tom's struggle to escape the stifling atmosphere of his home, and the melancholic memories of his past, which continue to haunt him.

10 By placing the moving curtain in the proscenium, the director adds a metastructural angle of interpretation to the play. In Act One, for example, the moving curtain cuts the

stage into two parts, allowing the director to introduce a dual temporal perspective where the adult Amanda reviews her past in a hallucinatory sequence of images where she appears as a young Southern Belle, surrounded by a hoard of suitors. This is the celebrated Blue Mountain Scene. Amanda's early courtship days are staged as an analeptic flow of memories. They are captured and projected onto the screen device which bears an oversized image of her family mansion, Blue Mountain. The chromatic blue tones, which saturate the scene, infiltrate it with an ambient melancholic past, indicative of the Wingfield sensibility. Lined up on the side of the stage, her children are seated on folding chairs. Both Tom and Laura try to disguise their boredom, averting their eyes as their mother rambles on about her glorious past. Amanda's gaze floods a seemingly empty space, which she fills with memories recaptured from her idealized Southern Belle past at Blue Mountain Plantation. She recalls, in particular, the day when seventeen gentlemen called on her. Here, the screen device functions as an Expressionist frame where memories from the distant past are allowed to continue to ebb and flow within the central time frame of immediate action. Aside from this structural advantage, the memory flow images enhance the emotional effect of melancholic memories. The melancholic "blue note" of the play thus weaves itself into the inner consciousness of the characters who are either locked in the past, like the Wingfield women, or paralyzed by the future, as is the case of Tom.

11 The Blue Mountain passage, which focuses on the Old Plantation South, corresponds to Scene One of the New Directions' written version of Williams' play. In an analeptic passage, Amanda tells Tom and Laura about her glorious days amongst plantation gentry: "One Sunday afternoon in Blue Mountain—your mother received—*seventeen!* gentlemen callers! Why, sometimes there weren't chairs enough to accommodate them all" (148). Stage directions indicate: [*Image on screen:* Amanda as a girl on a porch, greeting callers.] Then Amanda's memories of the genteel Southern culture of courtship come reeling back: "They knew how to entertain their gentlemen callers. It wasn't enough for a girl to be possessed of a pretty face and a graceful figure—although I wasn't slighted in either respect" (148). In the short story, there is no reference to Blue Mountain. The material for Blue Mountain and the extended references to old Southern aristocracy were most probably destined for the one-act play/movie script: *The Gentleman Caller.*[11] This romanticized vision of the plantation South provided Williams with a means of targeting a Hollywood audience that fed upon the stuff of romantic encounters and heroic ideals attached to the Civil War. Unlike its hypotext, which focuses on the inner-consciousness of Laura, the hypertext had to fulfill the demands of a film synopsis, using frame-by-frame images of an idealized South, rather than the internalized memory flashes that are part and parcel of "Portrait of a Girl in Glass." Williams shifted the temporal focus from the Depression Era in the short story to the Plantation South in the movie script with the likely intention of providing Hollywood with a second generation *Gone With the Wind*. Indeed, both stage devices and characterization in *The Glass Menagerie* (the moving screen and Tom's cinephilia) testify to Williams' fascination with the film industry at the time. In *Tennessee Williams' Notebooks,* Margaret Thornton mentions a letter Tennessee Williams wrote to his literary agent, Audrey Wood, in 1943, where he attests to having written a stage version of *The Gentleman Caller,* based on the short story "Portrait of a Girl in Glass", which was destined to become a film for MGM studios (Thornton 374). Williams evokes the sixteen-page short-story manuscript as a short excursion into the same material he was using for the stage version of *The Gentleman Caller*:

> I am sending you herein a hastily prepared synopsis or film story treatment of *The Gentleman Caller*. I have worked this out in spare time since I've been here, but as you know, the stage version, in a rough draft, is already written before I signed here. (Thornton 370)

12 If we consider Williams' correspondence with Wood below, images of the Old South certainly formed the thematic core of the missing movie script. He mentions the synopsis, or film story treatment, of *The Gentleman Caller* and his enthusiasm was so great that he believed it offered more than the stage version:

> I feel this could be made into a very moving and beautiful screen play—much better than the stage version could be—only it would have to run unusually long, about as long, I should think as *Gone With the Wind*. (Thornton 370)

13 *Gone With the Wind* was originally rough-cut at six hours in length and it was undoubtedly the model for Williams' missing film script. He described the opening shot of his film as including "wide flat fields, the dark cypress brakes, the river and the levees and bluffs along it. Negro share-croppers' cabins and immense Greek revival mansions" (Thornton 370). In fact, Williams imagined the film as having a "lighter and more cheerful conclusion than the stage version." One film story treatment ends with Laura sitting on the front porch with "almost a regiment of young soldiers" approaching. Williams goes on to add: "Perhaps even—at the very end—the first Tom Wingfield or the second returns from his travels" (Thornton 370).

14 This happy ending has the effect of curing the melancholic fever of the Wingfield family by offering them a rosy future, a version far removed from both the short story and the play. At the same time, it quite obviously appeals to the Hollywood cult of rags-to-riches stories so essential to perpetuating the American dream. From this perspective, the happy ending of the movie script veers away from the play's original Expressionist medium, focused on accessing the unconscious depths of the self. In 1943, the happy ending was intended to catch the attention of Hollywood directors at a moment when Williams was adamant about getting his foot in the door of the movie industry. Having held down dozens of odd jobs up until then—waiter, teletypist, cashier, to name a few—Williams was more than eager to sacrifice some of his personal convictions for Hollywood fame. After all, earning fifty dollars working in Hollywood paid better than his seventeen-dollar-a-week job as theatre usher. As chance would have it, the movie script (of which only twenty-one pages remain; the other thirty-nine are still missing) was turned down by MGM and Williams was able to get a grip back on his independence.

15 At the core of Nichet's staging, there lies a fascination with the unanswered question regarding this missing movie script that formed a cinematic link to the play:

> I have not been able to establish the existence of a movie script by Tennessee Williams: is it filed away in the archives of a library somewhere? Has it disappeared? Between 'Portrait of a Girl in Glass' and *The Glass Menagerie,* a link is missing. Paradoxically, this missing cinematic link can be detected very clearly in the theatrical version. On the other hand, the short story makes absolutely no allusion to it. The word isn't even mentioned.[12]

16 Critics, in general, seem to disregard the existence of the movie script. In "The Glass Menagerie, from Story to Play," Lester Beaurline evokes four previous versions of *The Glass Menagerie*,[13] but insists that there is little material evidence of a complete movie script, although fragmentary drafts are known to exist. In Jacques Nichet's adaptation, the missing Hollywood manuscript remains in the shadows; focalization is on the play

and the melancholic past of the Wingfields. In addition, there is no mention of an Antebellum past— notably because the Wingfields live in Paris! The eradication of the Southern Confederate past from the French version can be explained by the fact that Nichet intended to align his adaptation with the paradigm of the memory play by focusing on archetypal family conflicts. Understandably, references to American history and social critique travel less easily than more universal psychological themes. As a consequence, Nichet's staging embraces minimalism, and stage props indicative of social background are practically non-existent. The stage is Spartan, with a rare folding-chair or a pillow for substance. Stage lighting, on the other hand, is of primary importance. It may signify Laura's schizophrenic break with the world which is dramatized through the chiaroscuro effect of lighting. In Scene Two, Amanda penetrates the shadows, which engulf the stage, to confront Laura with the fact that she has dropped out of secretarial school. Laura does not go home during the daytime; instead she wanders around in parks and museums. With the aid of the screen device, Nichet projects an oversized image of trees in a park onto the stage. Technically, the screen device in the play functions as an equivalent to a montage effect in cinema. It allows for the juxtaposition of places and events to occur. The screen forms a structural bridge between movies and theatre, giving the impression of a cinematic slide show encased within the architecture of a play. In this way, it allows the director greater flexibility in bringing the theatrical medium closer to the cinematic, all the while providing the audience with a heightened visual experience.

17 Nichet dramatizes mental suffocation, repression and entrapment through oversized images and texts which dwarf the characters. Following the Expressionist medium, which inspired Williams, Nichet focuses on enclosure as a mental process. He evokes the process of enclosure through chromatic images and musical effects. In so doing, he creates a stifling mental landscape of the Wingfields' existence: "The characters find themselves with their back against the wall: a wall of images and legends which tower above them, crushing them."[14] He places his characters in an oversized world of objects, images and words, and insists on the importance of the screen device in achieving the effect of symbolic repression: "The screen which seems to fall from the sky consequently obliterates any potential reference to naturalism."[15] Tom, for example, escapes from the drudgery of everyday life by taking refuge in movie theatres, and other escape mechanisms like drinking and smoking, as Nichet notes:

> Tom is addicted to the movies. Each and every film is an antidote to the sterility of a monotone existence in which he finds himself trapped, day in and day out. This magic lantern enables him to escape from an otherwise stifling quotidian existence. [16]

18 Tom's cinemania is a sign of depravation in his mother's eyes—a mark of decrepitude and the cause of one of their worst domestic quarrels. In Scene Three, Nichet uses the screen device to project gigantic red letters—"Fed up"—onto the curtain. This announces the violent verbal altercation about to take place between mother and son. The quarrel soon transforms into a scene suggesting mental and sexual entrapment. Amanda crawls underneath her son's towering body where she lies in a semi-erotic, semi-embryonic position as he hurls insults at her. Nichet's staging hints at a sado-masochistic relationship. It puts the limelight on Tom's attempt to disengage himself from the confines of a latent incestuous relation that has played a part in keeping him enslaved to Amanda.

19 Nichet's closing scene is aligned with the original script; Laura blows out her candles, putting an abrupt end to the play. The French director preferred this alternative to the "happy ending" which was exploited in Irving Rapper's cinematic adaptation (1950)[17] where, Nichet notes, "almost everything was rewritten except the title!"[18] Rapper discarded the Old South ending that Tennessee Williams had imagined for his Hollywood script, preferring a modern romantic scene with Laura waiting for Richard, the next gentleman caller, to arrive. Paradoxically, Rapper's adaptation, with its insistence on realism, is a throwback to everything that Tennessee Williams vilipended in his "Production Notes" to *The Glass Menagerie*. It could be argued that to the detriment of the organic and Expressionistic, the film reinstates "the photographic likeness" Williams had denounced so adamantly. This raises questions that go far beyond the scope of my paper. One illuminating article by Hugh MacMullan, dialogue director of Rapper's *Glass Menagerie,* is worth mentioning here. In "Translating *The Glass Menagerie* to film" (26), MacMullan cites problems that directors like Irving Rapper inevitably encounter when trying to adapt Williams to the big screen. MacMullan suggests that *The Glass Menagerie* is essentially literary and symbolic in style and is not readily adaptable to the cinematic medium. Following this assumption, he notes that the dramatic style of the play does not blend with the cinematic of real people existing in a real world. MacMullan finally concludes on an encomium of Rapper's happy ending, which had initially been appended, and has been the subject of much critical debate. Williams, for one, took a firm stance on Rapper's ending.

20 In his letter to Irene Selznick (June 14, 1949), Williams avows being "terribly shocked" by the ending: "I don't remember it being quite that bad." He adds emphatically: "Unfortunately, the only true ending was the one in the play [...]" (Thornton 502). In essence, *The Glass Menagerie* has always proved to be a challenge for directors to adapt to television and to the big screen.[19] In general, stage directors are more attuned to the original text than Hollywood directors, as Williams pointed out himself. Irving Rapper's ending, for example, espouses the Hollywood impulse to foist the optimistic narrative of the American dream onto the story line in order to satisfy the expectations of the larger public. In contrast, Jacques Nichet's adaptation of Tennessee Williams' memory play remains faithful to Tennessee Williams as far as its Expressionist medium goes. In addition, Jean-Michel Déprats' translation takes care to align itself with the original text. All of the thirty-four legends and images, missing from the acting version of the play, are included in the French text.

21 However, there is a caveat here; the visual effects of Nichet's play all too often succumb to burlesque inconsistencies. As a result, the audience's responsiveness gravitates towards a conflicted sense of melancholy and comic appraisal. This is to the detriment of the audience's capacity to tap into the play's expressionism and the sensibility of the Wingfield family. Laura's black combat-style boots (intended to call attention to her handicap) are intriguing, but they clash sharply with her delicate summer dresses, making her stand out as a figure of feminine endurance in the play. Furthermore, Nichet's decision to portray Laura's melancholy as a descent into autism, after her romantic deception, gives the young actress the aspect of a character from mute theatre. Finally, focus on displaying Tom's bare muscular biceps runs astray of projecting the character of a fragile poet, as it gives the impression of a redneck, rather than a rebel. As for the missing screen device, which Nichet incorporates into his adaptation of *The Glass Menagerie*, it does provide a vivid and entertaining visual

reference for the audience. But the hyperbolic overstatements in acting and in stage effects run the danger of draining the literary quality of the play, which is the hallmark of *The Glass Menagerie*.

22 During an interview with one of the stage managers who worked with Nichet for the Nantes production in 2009-2010, it became clear that the question of how to make the tragedy of the Wingfields less tragic was of central concern for the French adaptation. A concerted effort was thus made to lighten up *The Glass Menagerie* by altering the element of pathos and introspective melancholy at the expense of Tennessee Williams' initial design. Of course, the question of Tennessee Williams' initial design is complex. Each version of *The Glass Menagerie*—from short story, to movie script to play—is different, but all of them inevitably confront the problem of repressed desire, more or less explicitly. The hint of incest in the brother-sister interaction is visible in some of the adaptations; and depending on the director, it is given more or less importance. The staging of the memory play has incessantly toyed with a repressed representation of the quasi-incestuous and doomed love between brother and sister ever since the Broadway opening of *The Glass Menagerie.* The incestuous tension of Tom and Laura's relationship lies pulsating under the surface of many adaptations, yet Nichet displaces it onto a mother-son relationship. This is a problematic stance to take, bearing in mind the fact that the genesis of *The Glass Menagerie*, from short story to movie script to memory play, has given a privileged relationship to that of brother and sister. In the short story and in the second draft, which made up the one-act version of the play that served as a synopsis for the movie script, there was an explicit allusion to this relationship at the end, but Tennessee Williams censured it in the written and acting versions that followed (Beaurline 144). In Scene Seven of *The Glass Menagerie*, which forms the serpent's tail of the play, bringing us back to the beginning, Tom appears on stage one last time and avows that he cannot settle down in one place. He ventures an elusive explanation as to why he stays on the run: "I would have stopped, but I was pursued by something" (237). This announces a dramatic turning point as Williams introduces the mnemic device of colored glass to represent the agent that arouses repressed memories as Tom recollects images of his sister:

> Tom: The window is filled with pieces of colored glass, tiny transparent bottles in delicate colors, like bits of a shattered rainbow. Then all at once my sister touches my shoulder. I turn around and look into her eyes. (237)

23 In "Portrait of a Girl in Glass," Tom's recollections of Laura were aroused by the presence of colored glass and they opened up on more explicit desires. These forbidden memories crack through defense mechanisms, literally spilling out in the closing lines of Tom's narrative:

> In five years' time I had nearly forgotten home. I had to forget it. I couldn't carry it around with me. But once in a while, usually in a strange town, before I have found companions, the shell of deliberate hardness is broken through. A door comes softly and irresistibly open [...] I hold my breath, for if my sister's face appears among them - the night is hers! (103)

24 In the second draft, the one-act play, the repressed returns like a boomerang and is expressed in even more graphic terms. Lester Beaurline notes: "In the one-act version, Williams heightened the incestuous implications of the speech which became more explicit:

> In five years time I have nearly forgotten home. But there are nights when memory is stronger. I cannot hold my shoulder to the door, the door comes softly but

> irresistibly open. I hold my breath. I reach for a cigarette. I buy a drink; I speak to the nearest stranger. For if that vision goes on growing clearer, the mist will divide upon my sister's face, watching gently and daring to ask for nothing. Then it's too much: my manhood is undone and the night is hers.[20]

25 The image of a partly repressed incestuous love, explicitly represented in "Portrait of a Girl in Glass" and the one-act play, is attenuated in *The Glass Menagerie* where the bedroom scene has been expurgated. Contrary to the short story and the one-act play, where Tom's closing lines can be equated with the symbolic reenactment of an incestuous vision, *The Glass Menagerie* portrays him as actively trying to ward off this fantasy through a filmic narrative mode saturated with chiaroscuro effects. Williams' stage directions—"*the moon breaks through the clouds*" (236)—further evoke the inner landscape of Tom's sexual ambivalence. The contrast between obscurity and light is sustained until the moment Tom comes on stage to pronounce his closing lines. Indeed his speech ends at the very moment Laura *blows out her candles*:

> Tom: Oh, Laura, Laura, I tried to leave you behind me, but I am more faithful than I intended to be! I reach for a cigarette, I cross the street, I run into the movies or a bar, I buy a drink, I speak to the nearest stranger— anything that can blow your candles out! (237)

26 The memory play, with its imbricated layers of souvenirs and its focalization on the Gentleman caller, which I have not treated here for want of time, contributes to concealing the implicit story which resurfaces in the return of the repressed; it is the story Tom cannot escape, but attempts to through escape mechanisms. It is, above all, the story which has been both censored and censured in the final drafts of *The Glass Menagerie*. To corroborate this assumption, let us consider an instance of dreamwork that Tennessee Williams recorded in his *Notebooks*.[21] The diaries describe vivid scenes of forbidden desire linked to Rose, which form a peculiar resonance with mnemic images of Laura, elicited in the closing scene of the short story and the play. In his personal diary, Williams evokes a secretive world of dreams in which Rose resurfaces as a complex signifier for the displacement of sexual desire, entrapment and suffocation. The first entrance corresponds to Monday, 6 December 1948:

> I dreamed of my sister. Woke up. Then went to sleep and dreamed of her again. At one point I was lying in her bed, the ivory-colored bed: but it was not a dream of incest, although I am at a loss to explain it. I was standing naked in a room. Heard footsteps. Jumped in the bed to cover myself. Discovered it was my sister's bed. She entered the room. Spoke to me angrily and pulled back the covers. I struggled not to expose my nakedness. [...] There I woke up. Another time during the night I woke up gasping for breath: had a feeling of dying [...]. (495)

27 In the second entry (Monday, 19 October, 1953) the mnemic trace of the love-object resurfaces through the color beige. Both desirable and repelling, it provokes a similar feeling of suffocation, entrapment, and sexual ambiguity six years later when Williams dreamed of his sister again:

> I've dreamed of my sister, seeing her in a cream-colored lace dress which I had forgotten. In the dream a lady who looked like my sister wore it - then I had it on and then I was struggling to sit down between two tables and was wedged so tightly between them I couldn't breathe. (599)

28 The extratextual record of this dreamwork forms a palimpsest upon which we can decipher intertextual mnemic traces of repression, which resurface in *The Glass Menagerie* and "Portrait of a Girl in Glass." As such, the dreamwork expresses something equivalent to a filmic narrative sequence in which the mnemic image of Laura

encapsulates a complex signifier where death and desire are cleaved together in a primal way. This further enlightens the theme of entrapment, which haunts *The Glass Menagerie*, suggesting that beneath the surface appearance of Tom's suffocating quotidian existence, there lies a deeper ambivalence about the trappings of sexuality (in both its incestuous and gender manifestations). As a result, the dreamwork from *Tennessee Williams' Notebooks* serves to corroborate the assumption that both literature and dreams are all part of the "cinema of the inner consciousness" (Butler 64), which we can understand to be filmic.

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APPENDIXES

SCREEN ADAPTATIONS

Harvey, Anthony. *The Glass Menagerie*: Katherine Hepburn, Joanna Miles, Sam Waterson, 1973. TV adaptation.

Newman, Paul. *The Glass Menagerie*: Joanne Woodward, Karen Allen, John Malkovich, James Naughton, 1987.

Rapper, Irving. *The Glass Menagerie*: Jane Wyman, Gertrude Lawrence, Arthur Kennedy, Kirk Douglas, 1950.

NOTES

1. See pages 64-65 for more details about the missing script of which only twenty-one pages have survived. I will refer to it as "the missing script," since the manuscript is incomplete.
2. Williams went to California to work on a movie script in 1943. Before he left, he worked up a synopsis for a film named *The Gentleman Caller.* (See Nancy Tischler, *Tennessee Williams,* 92).
3. Nichet is director of "Théâtre National de Toulouse" and "Chair de création artistique au Collège de France. "
4. Jacques Nichet's adaptation has been staged in several French theatres: *Théâtre de la Commune*, Paris, 2009; *Le Grand T*, Nantes, 2009-2010, and *Théâtre de la Piscine*, Chatenay Malabry 2011.
5. Quotes from the short story are taken from *One Arm and Other Stories,* New York: New Directions, 1967.
6. In his "Production Notes" to *The Glass Menagerie*, Williams associates the memory play with Expressionism and elaborates on the specific purpose of the screen device in theatre: "It gives accent to certain values in each scene. [...] The legend or image upon the screen will strengthen the effect of what is merely allusion in the writing and allow the primary point to be made more simply and lightly than if the entire responsibility were on the spoken lines. Aside from this structural value, I think the screen will have a definite emotional appeal [...]." (New York*:* New Directions, 1971) 131-2.
7. All citations from *The Glass Menagerie* are taken from the authoritative edition by New Directions.
8. See *The Theatre of Tennessee Williams*, *The Glass Menagerie*, Vol I. New York: New Directions, 1971, reedited 1990. Williams' reference to screen devices has been conserved in this written version.
9. *The Glass Menagerie.* New York: Dramatists Play Service Inc., 1976.
10. All descriptions and quotes are from Jacques Nichet's *la Ménagerie de verre; Compagnie l'Inattendu*, video recording of the play, filmed at Théâtre de la Piscine, Chatenay Malabry, 2011.
11. *The Gentleman Caller* is the title of the sixty page one-act play in five scenes from which the synopsis for a film script, with the same name, was taken.
12. My English translation. See J. Nichet, *La Ménagerie de Verre,* ed. Théâtre National de Nice, p. 1. " Je n'ai pas pu prendre connaissance du scenario de Tennessee Williams: est-il archivé dans un fonds de bibliothèque? A-t-il disparu? Entre *le Portrait d'une Jeune Fille en Verre* et *La Ménagerie de Verre*, un chaînon manque. Paradoxalement, ce manque de cinéma s'affirme fortement dans la version théâtrale. En revanche, la nouvelle n'y fait aucune illusion, le mot n'apparaît même pas. "
13. For more details see my introduction and Lester Beaurline, "*The Glass Menagerie*, from Story to Play," 143.
14. My English translation. See J. Nichet, p. 1 "Les personnages se trouvent dos au mur, un mur d'images et de légendes bien plus grandes qu'eux."
15. My English translation. *Ibid.* « Cet écran tombé du ciel écrase toute tentation ou tentative naturaliste. »
16. My English translation. *Ibid.* "Cinéphage, Tom se drogue. Chaque film, n'importe lequel, lui offre un antidote à l'ennui stérile, répété, jour après jour, au gâchis de sa vie piégée dans une " boîte [...] Cette lanterne magique lui permet d'échapper à l'étouffement quotidien [...]."

17. With Kirk Douglas, Jane Wyman and Gertrude Lawrence and Tennessee Williams' collaboration.
18. My English translation. *Ibid.* « Presque tout a été réécrit sauf le titre! »
19. Cinematic adaptations: Irving Rapper (1950); Paul Newman (1987) and TV: Anthony Harvey (1973).
20. The quote is taken from the one act-play manuscript, C. Waller Barrett Library, University of Virginia [MS.p. 103 (60)] 144.
21. M. B. Thornton, *Tennessee Williams' Notebooks*.

ABSTRACTS

Une analyse de la genèse de *The Glass Menagerie* met en lumière ses nombreux liens avec la nouvelle "Portrait of a Girl in Glass" dont elle est d'ailleurs tirée. Nous verrons aussi qu'il existe une filiation avec le scénario *The Gentleman Caller* dont il ne reste qu'un maigre manuscrit. Cet article examine la structure tripartite inhérente à *The Glass Menagerie*. En effet, cette pièce est passée du stade de la nouvelle à celui d'un scénario rédigé à la hâte pour Hollywood avant de devenir ce que Williams appelle une "memory play". Si l'on en croit ce que Williams écrit dans "Notes de théâtre", la pièce aurait été initialement conçue comme un genre hybride: à la fois théâtrale et filmique, ceci grâce à l'insertion de ce qu'il avait imaginé comme "cinematic devices"–un écran mobile sur lequel se projetaient des images. Lorsque le metteur en scène Jacques Nichet s'avisa que la pièce de Williams était régulièrement présentée sans ces supports filmiques, il prit la décision de l'adapter en intégrant la technique cinématographique voulue par l'auteur. Cet article se propose d'explorer la façon dont les supports filmiques fonctionnent en tant qu'innovation esthétique dans *La ménagerie de verre* de Nichet, et d'analyser la fidélité de cette production à la conception originelle de Williams: ce dernier, en effet, souhaitait poser les jalons d'un genre novateur, la narration filmée comme instrument de la dramatisation théâtrale, osant ainsi l'hybridation des deux modes d'expression représentés par le cinéma et le théâtre.

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